

Thompson (MS)	Walberg	Weller
Thornberry	Walsh (NY)	Westmoreland
Tiberi	Walz (MN)	Whitfield (KY)
Tierney	Wamp	Wilson (NM)
Towns	Wasserman	Wilson (OH)
Tsongas	Schultz	Wilson (SC)
Turner	Waters	Wittman (VA)
Udall (CO)	Watson	Wolf
Udall (NM)	Watt	Woolsey
Upton	Waxman	Wu
Van Hollen	Weiner	Young (AK)
Velázquez	Welch (VT)	Young (FL)
Visclosky	Weldon (FL)	

NOT VOTING—18

Bishop (UT)	Fossella	Rush
Brown, Corrine	Gillibrand	Tiahrt
Carter	Green, Gene	Walden (OR)
Castor	Kennedy	Wexler
Crenshaw	LaTourette	Wynn
Feeney	Rangel	Yarmuth

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (during the vote). Members are reminded there are less than 2 minutes remaining in this vote.

□ 1909

Mr. SIMPSON changed his vote from "nay" to "yea."

So (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend remarks on general debate concerning H.R. 5658.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. POMEROY). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Missouri?

There was no objection.

DUNCAN HUNTER NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2009

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 1213 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 5658.

□ 1910

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 5658) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2009 for military activities of the Department of Defense, to prescribe military personnel strengths for fiscal year 2009, and for other purposes, with Mr. JACKSON of Illinois in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered read the first time.

The gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) and the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) each will control 1 hour.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Missouri.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, today the House begins consideration of H.R. 5658, which is the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009.

This bill is a collective effort in the bipartisan tradition of the House Armed Services Committee which approved the bill in markup by a vote of 61-0. It is an excellent bill.

I want to thank the members of our Armed Services Committee, particularly the subcommittee chairmen, the ranking members, and actually every member of the committee.

Let me take this opportunity to also, Mr. Chairman, recognize the ranking member and former chairman, DUNCAN HUNTER, for once again being a great partner on this bill, and he is certainly to be commended and thanked for it. I am proud that DUNCAN and I have worked so well together through the years and always with the common goal of enhancing American national security.

It is only fitting, Mr. Chairman, that as DUNCAN HUNTER plans to retire at the end of this Congress, our committee colleagues unanimously voted to name this bill in his honor, recognizing DUNCAN HUNTER's many years of service on the Armed Services Committee, and also recognizing his unfailing support of our men and women in uniform. And we thank him publicly for that.

Mr. Chairman, let me discuss some significant provisions of the bill. It reflects our committee's view that restoring military readiness must be our number one priority. This is serious business. If, after more than 6 years of war, our effort is to restore military readiness, then it must be sustained in order to meet not just current military challenges, which are monumental, but prepare for the unexpected conflicts we may face in the future.

We don't know what is around the corner. I might point out, in the last 31 years American military forces have been engaged in no less than 12 military conflicts, four of which have been major in size.

The bill directs approximately \$2 billion toward unfunded readiness initiatives requested by the services. It includes \$932 million to deal with equipment shortages as well as for equipment maintenance. The bill also provides for some \$800 million for National Guard and Reserve equipment, and \$650 million to keep defense facilities in good working order and to address urgent issues such as dilapidated military barracks.

□ 1915

To boost readiness and to reduce the strain on our forces, the bill increases the size of our military; 7,000 additional Army troops, 5,000 additional marines, and prevents further military to civilian conversions in the medical field by authorizing an additional 1,023 Navy sailors and 450 additional Air Force personnel.

The bill also maintains our efforts to support and honor the men and women who serve our Nation in uniform and their families, providing a much needed 3.9 percent pay raise increase, and again, prohibiting increases in health care fees, among a range of other initiatives.

I might point out, the administration recommended only a 3.4 percent pay raise, and we raised that, as we should have.

The authorization bill also keeps our focus on Afghanistan, which is the primary front in the war on terror. The bill requires the administration to submit separate budget requests to clearly lay out the requirements for the war in Afghanistan, and on the other hand, the war in Iraq. It requires a system be set up to measure the success of the U.S.-led Provincial Reconstruction Teams, and requires more robust congressional reporting on the training of the Afghan Security Force.

Finally, the bill requires the Department of Defense to address the issue of command and control for forces in Afghanistan operating under Operation Enduring Freedom, as well as the NATO International Security Assistance Force.

The bill authorizes a \$70 billion bridge for the fights in Iraq and Afghanistan. But we remain convinced that it's well past time for the Iraqis to step up and contribute more substantially to their very own security, as well as their prosperity. With the Iraqis' overwhelming budget and capital account surpluses, the bill requires Iraqis to invest more in their own reconstruction, as well as their own security efforts.

The bill also includes steps toward contracting reform after the substantial improvements in the law which we enacted in our previous bill last year.

This bill underlines our commitment to preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. It adds \$31 million for the Cooperative Threat Reduction programs of the Department of Defense, and some \$215 million from the Department of Energy's non-proliferation programs. That's important.

Finally, I want to say a word about the need for reforms in the way our government coordinates and executes its national security policy. Many here in Congress as well as the executive branch are working to improve our interagency system. It's a massive effort that cannot be accomplished in any one single year.

I remember well the now famous Goldwater-Nichols Act. It was an effort over 4 years in the Congress of the United States which, of course, made jointness part of the military culture, and this may well be along the same line, although hopefully it will not take 4 years to accomplish. But it cannot be done in one single year.

At the appropriate time during the bill's consideration, I will offer an amendment along with Chairman HOWARD BERMAN of the Foreign Affairs